



MOPS

WE GO TOGETHER

5-Day Devo





DAY ONE:

We Go Together

Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." (Luke 5:18-20, NIV)

Word spread that Jesus has arrived back in Capernaum, and a crowd gathers with people wanting to hear from him and maybe witness a miracle or two. Then, as Jesus shares inside a house, a group of friends arrive outside. Friends have carried their paralyzed buddy to Jesus only to be turned away by the volume of the crowd.

The Bible doesn't give details, but there had to be a moment of disappointment. The guy on the stretcher might have said, "Hey, guys, thanks for trying, but it doesn't look like it's going to happen today." However, in that moment of resignation, one of the friends gets creative (there's one in every group) and says, "I have an idea. What about the roof?" Everyone gets a second wind.

The friends climb on the roof and start tearing through the tiling. They are men possessed by determination. It's a huge risk. It's destruction of property. And yet their friend needs to see Jesus.

People in the house start to hear noises, and minutes later dirt and debris begin falling on their heads, followed by a person. These friends courageously go all in and interrupt Jesus in the middle of his teaching. Peering through the hole in the roof, they watch as Jesus approaches the man they have just lowered and says to him, Friend, your sins are forgiven.

So many of us feel a little numb. We've each lost something or felt disappointed over the past few years and now we are needing a new way to move forward. We need a fresh start. That's what this young man needed, what his friends helped him find, what Jesus offered him - a fresh start.

Søren Kierkegaard, a 19th-century theologian and poet, wrote "People settle for a level of despair they can tolerate and call it happiness." This is the year we no longer settle for tolerable despair, and instead, we'll dream bigger, risk greater and love better. And the way we're going to do that is through the company we keep. Having your people by your side is not a perk of living a giant, beautiful, juicy life - it's a prerequisite.

It's time to toss out our notions that we must do any of this alone, that it's "too late" to create an abundantly rich group of girlfriends or that the pace of life leaves no room for meaningful connection. Instead, we'll take in something new, something God is always using to reach out to us: deep relationships.

Having a genuine, supportive, honest group of female friends in your circle is one of the biggest life upgrades. If you desperately want this kind of friendship but it feels hard to come by, you're not alone. Community is such a cliché concept, but the truth is, we are all pretty desperate for it. We know it will make our lives better, and yet finding friends as adults can feel intimidating. Despite our best efforts, we all seem to be in the midst of a loneliness epidemic.

Consider This:

- Are you ready to toss out the notion that you must do life alone?
- Are you willing to embrace something new?
- Read the story in Luke 5:17-26 again. What did the friends offer the paralyzed man?
- What are you looking for in a community of friends?
- What are you offering to your own community?



TOGETHER ...

We will be *unoffendable*,
show up and *expect good things*
for and from those around us.

What do you think when you read this statement?

At MOPS, we are declaring this to be the year of friendship, courage and purpose. Friendships where we aggressively believe in each other, pray for each other and believe the other deserves the world. Your best days are ahead of you. We are going to be here cheering you on. And what you can't do alone, we can and will do together.



DAY TWO:

Be Unoffendable

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18, NIV)

In Luke 5:20, Jesus said: “Your sins are forgiven.” These powerful words of Jesus were quite provocative but incredibly intentional. Along with the neighbors and friends in the house listening to Jesus were religious leaders called Pharisees. They were devoted to a very rigorous set of rules that were to be followed perfectly. They separated themselves from everything and everyone they thought were unholy, believing that God’s love was reserved for those who behaved the same way they did. They listened to Jesus with critical ears, ready to pounce on any words or behavior that offended their understanding of Scripture.

When the Pharisees hear Jesus say to the paralytic man, “Your sins are forgiven,” they consider Jesus to be blasphemous; only God can forgive sins. Yet Jesus is intentionally revealing that he is the Messiah, on equal footing with God, with the power to forgive and heal. The religious leaders used logic and correctly believed that only God could forgive sins, and they were wise to be cautious of a new teacher. Their error was in refusing to see who Jesus actually was: God the Son, who has the authority to forgive sins.

Another important thing about this story is that when Jesus forgives the man’s sin, he isn’t pointing out that the paralyzed man is especially sinful or that his paralysis had been caused by sin. Instead, he’s addressing the man’s greatest need and the common root of all pain and suffering — our separation from God. Jesus heals the man’s soul, and then he heals his body.

All of this happens because of the borrowed faith of his friends. May we have faith for ourselves but also know that Jesus can and will meet the needs of others we bring to him. May we resist the urge to decide who is in and who is out, and may we carry people to Jesus, no matter the weight, even when it’s heavy or awkward or doesn’t fit into our timeline. May we carry people to Jesus who sin differently than we do, people who vote or live or parent differently. Most of all, may we live unoffended so we can see the truth of who Jesus is and what he wants to do in the life of every person we meet.

Over the past few years, too many relationships have ended due to division and different viewpoints. Now is the time to fix what’s broken. Refuse to spend any extra time on petty arguments or trivial disagreements. We won’t let differences divide us; we don’t have time for this kind of no-win wandering. The people around Jesus were always trying to bait him into black/white, right/wrong, and he always found the third way. He wasn’t offended, wasn’t defensive. Instead, he was the one turning water into wine, eating with his enemies, providing stimulating conversation and healing people.

Consider This:

- Have you recently judged or offered criticism too quickly?
- Is there something for which you need to ask forgiveness? Will you do that today?
- Do you assume the best about others? If not, how can you begin?

TOGETHER ...

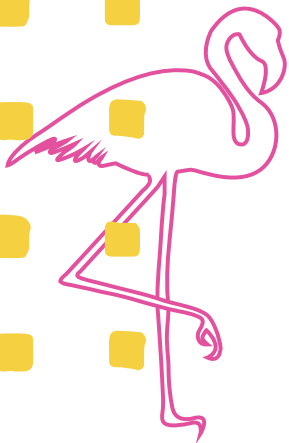
We will be people who *do things*,
not people who talk about how others
are doing things. We'll *offer help* more
readily than we offer criticism. When we
feel judged or criticized, we'll *assume*
the best. If we mess up, we'll ask for
forgiveness. We'll *learn from each*
other and surround ourselves with people
who are different from us. Instead of
dwelling on our insecurities that cause us
to huddle together, we'll dismantle the
cliques that make us feel *safe* and look for
ways to make others feel *included*.

Everyone is in.

Everyone is welcome.

We'll be teachable.

Uniters instead of dividers.





DAY THREE:

Show Up

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
(1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV)

Showing up is what turns people you know into your people. People who you've seen at their best and worst and who you can invite in even when you, your house or your world is a wreck. This kind of relationship will require risk, but we have to resist insecurity and embrace awkwardness because connection requires vulnerability.

Friendship matters to God. When God created the world, God said that everything was good. But once he created Adam, something was not good. *It is not good that the man should be alone* (Genesis 2:18, ESV). Although humankind's deepest problem is sin, our first problem was aloneness.

Then throughout the Bible, we read of our fracturing and God restoring our relationship with Him and with each other.

- Enoch and Noah “walked with God” — a Hebrew expression of friendship (Genesis 5:24;6:9, ESV).
- Abraham was called “a friend of God” (James 2:23, ESV).
- Moses spoke with God “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11, ESV).
- Jesus came to lay down his life for our sins because “greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13, ESV).

In the story we are studying this week, we see a man who had no choice but to accept help. In the culture in which he lived, being sick meant he couldn't work, couldn't support himself, couldn't care for himself or be an active part of his family - if he had one. And we see four men who were determined to get their friend to Jesus. The Bible doesn't tell us how they became friends - it doesn't really matter. The fact is, they were committed to this friendship. We also don't know why they were so determined - maybe they had been healed themselves by Jesus, maybe they had heard what Jesus had done for others, or maybe they were just tired of seeing their friend suffer. Whatever their reason, they showed up in a big way for their friend, and nothing was going to stop them. Not fatigue - they had to have been worn out from carrying him. Not the house - it slowed them down a little, but it didn't stop them. Not the people between them and Jesus. How often have we let obstacles keep us from showing up for others? Or, worse yet, how often have we been the obstacle that kept someone from getting what they need?

Consider This:

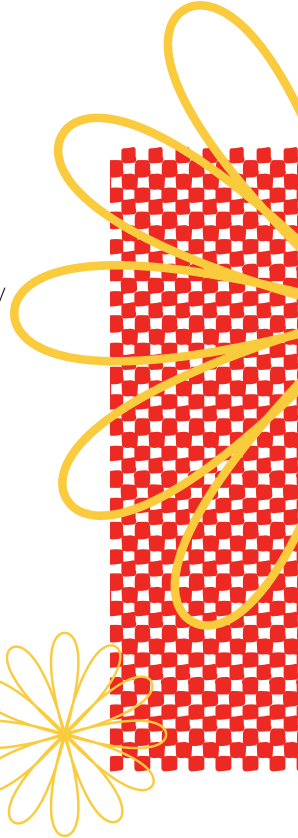
- How can you begin connecting with others and helping them connect to what they need?
- Who can you connect with today and how will you do it? (You can list more than one person, but come back and draw a heart around the person's name once you connect with them!)
- What obstacles have kept you from showing up for others in the past?

TOGETHER ...

We'll *show up for each other* in the ways we need, and if we don't know how, we'll ask. We'll get creative in *connecting with people* and be the kind of women who shout our friend's name in a room full of opportunities. No jealousy or competition here.

Instead, we'll be midwives for each other, coming around to help birth *each other's dreams* and bring one another's unique *offerings into the world*. Building the life you want takes a village.

May it begin with being *courageous, bold*, and *going all in* on friendship.



DAY FOUR:

Expect Good Things

So [Jesus] said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." (Luke 5:24-26, NIV)

There is a myth that comfort is a collective right, and we should do everything we can to obtain it. So we try to mitigate risk, make wise long-term investments and stay safe. This concern for comfort seeps into our faith too. Yet the friends in Luke 5 didn't choose the safe route. It wasn't a "wise decision" to lower a friend through a hole in the roof.

Some of the best things are found on the other side of fear. And let's be honest, following Jesus isn't safe. So, let's consider what "safe" plans we have constructed and consider where Jesus is saying to get a little more creative in how we bring our friends to him. How can we bravely expect good things for our friends just like the buddies in this story who took a risk because they knew something better was possible for their hurting friend?

Your courageous faith could be a catalyst in someone else's life. Faith moves the hand of God. Jesus is the Son of God who has the authority to forgive sins and bring freedom. He is worth the risk. There are desperate, paralyzed, hurting people who need some friends to get pushy on their behalf. May we have the wisdom to exchange safety and control for the opportunity to love and serve. And may we show ourselves grace when we are the ones who need to be served.

Sometimes we look around and feel like we haven't done enough — haven't worked hard enough to cultivate friendships, haven't accomplished what we thought we would in life. Motherhood, marriage and life have proved harder than we thought they would be, and shame tells us it's because we've done it wrong, we don't measure up, it's too late. The disappointments of life make us forget how to live expectantly. Don't buy into the oppressive voice that always tries to convince you you're not enough or don't have enough time, money or accomplishments. Imagine that you are 95 years old looking back at your today-years-old self. You'd tell her, "Your life is just beginning! You are sitting on a pile of gems, you just can't see it yet because you are blinded by your shame. Resist the rush. Just because it hasn't happened yet doesn't mean it's not going to. Beautiful things are ahead of you. Your current season is the proving ground for divine participation."

Lastly, we don't have to do any of this alone. In this story, we watch a group of friends carry the weight of one soul. Too often we think we have to carry the weight ourselves or put pressure on ourselves to have all the answers. The truth is, it can be a team lift. It's a team effort to carry people to Jesus. We each have a role, but it's not up to us alone.

Consider This:

- What remarkable things has God done in your life recently? Tell someone about it.

What God did:

Who I will tell:

- What big prayers should you be praying? Make a list and commit to praying big prayers this week.



TOGETHER ...

May this season be filled with
confident faith.

*Now faith is confidence in what we
hope for and assurance about what
we do not see (Hebrews 11:10, NIV).*

May we be people who pray crazy *big
prayers.* May we be alert to the voice
of God, developing a *deep trust* in
what our purpose is. We are going to
come together as friends and show
the world the *remarkable things*
that God can do.

As we do, may you find sisters who will
help you do what feels impossible.





DAY FIVE:

Together

After Jesus' death and resurrection, His friends are so compelled by what they'd seen and heard that they begin to live differently, and people flocked to it because it was different and refreshing. What was it about this new community that caused people to want to be a part of it? In part, it was radical friendship, mutual flourishing and courageous faith.

In fact, at the end of the story we have been studying this week, we read that the people there were surprised and gave thanks to God, saying, *"We have seen very special things today."* The crowd saw the determination of the friends. Jesus honored the friends' faith and healed the paralyzed man.

Most "evangelism" in the early church was simply friendship, conversation and people living in different and compelling ways. Following Jesus encouraged the believers to think less about their differences and more about their commonalities. Their example of human flourishing compelled people. It stood out; it was distinctive. The Book of Acts portrays what it looked like in practice. It wasn't fancy or showy; it was simple.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47, NIV)

Can you imagine how powerful it will be if we were to embrace this model and become countercultural communities of friendship and flourishing?

Consider This:

- What about your life is distinctive? What compels others to ask about your relationship with Jesus?
- Read Acts 2:42-47 and make a list of the things they devoted themselves to. Next to each item, write a way you could do the same. Pick one and get started right now.
- How will embracing this countercultural model change your community? (There are many ways this will change you and your community, but don't miss the result listed in Acts 2:47)



TOGETHER ...

May we find *boldness* in our purpose
and *comfort* in being known. May we
find ease in dealing with people who
would normally annoy or offend us. May
we find ourselves at home in any room
we enter. And may we *say yes* to the
new things God wants to do in our life.

May we go all in on *friendship* and
find *sisters* who will help us tear the
roof off to get to Jesus. May we witness
remarkable things as women get
healed. And may the Lord add to our
number daily those who are being
saved. Amen, let it be so.